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ABSTRACT

To provide information on characteristics of rural and small schools in Region VII of the U.S. Department of Education, this profile presents selected demographic data on schools in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. A narrative section discusses the purpose of the report, definitions of rural and nonmetropolitan classifications, percentages of rural and metropolitan enrollments in the states, racial/ethnic characteristics of the nonmetropolitan schools, distribution of federal education discretionary grants, and several issues (finance, teacher recruitment and maintenance, diseconomies of scale) affecting rural schools in the region. The reference section details sources and raw figures for the data presented in the narrative, and includes maps of the nonmetropolitan and Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) within the four states. (JD)

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RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOLS IN REGION VII

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
REGION VII, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

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ABSTRACT

Rural and small schools play a major role in the total education system in the States of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. These four states, comprising Region VII of the U.S. Department of Education, are located in what is frequently termed the grain belt of the United States. In this region, agribusiness is the mainstay of the rural economy and the rural school is often the focal point for the educational, cultural, and social activities of the local community.

The magnitude of rural school districts within Region VII is illustrated by the fact that of 2,387 school districts, 2,125 or 89% are located in nonmetropolitan areas. Each of the four states has considerably more nonmetropolitan school districts than metropolitan. The percentages of nonmetropolitan school districts in each of the four states are Iowa 88.3%; Kansas 84.4%; Missouri 78.2%; and Nebraska 96.1%.

With the high percentage of nonmetropolitan school districts within Region VII, it is not surprising that slightly more than one half of the total public school enrollment attends nonmetropolitan schools. Only in Missouri do fewer students attend nonmetropolitan schools than metropolitan. Iowa has the largest percentage of pupils attending nonmetropolitan schools with 62.6%. Iowa is followed by Nebraska with 57.1%, Kansas with 53.3%, and Missouri with 39.4% of its pupils enrolled in nonmetropolitan public schools.

Not only is the majority of Region VII's public school districts nonmetropolitan, but the districts' enrollments are very small. Consider, for example, that of the 2,387 school districts, 1,653 or 69.3% have a total district enrollment of less than 600 pupils. Of these 1,653 school districts, 1,573 or 65.9% are in nonmetropolitan areas. In fact, 1,190 of Region VII's public school districts have enrollments of 300 pupils or less.

The racial/ethnic composition of nonmetropolitan school districts in Region VII is basically homogeneous. During the 1976–77 school year, the pupil enrollment in nonmetropolitan public schools was 96.2% White, 2.0% Black, 1.0% Hispanic, .5% American Indian, and .3% Asian. The racial/ethnic composition was fairly consistent among the four states.

Even though the majority of Region VII's school districts and enrollments are nonmetropolitan, the region's metropolitan school districts receive the bulk of federal education discretionary grants. During fiscal year 1980, metropolitan school districts received 44 such grants totalling approximately $8.5 million while nonmetropolitan school districts received 13 grants totalling approximately $1.4 million. However, it must be stated that most federal education discretionary grants are targeted for specific purposes which are more commonly addressed in metropolitan districts.

While the issues affecting rural and nonmetropolitan schools in Region VII are almost as diverse as the number of such schools, a few common issues and concerns appear to impact upon a great number of them. These issues are adequate financing by all levels of government, recruiting and maintaining qualified staff, and providing services to special need pupils. Diseconomies of scale compound these issues in rural and small schools.

MAR TOK 80

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE #

I. NARRATIVE

Introduction and Purpose 1

Rural or Nonmetroplitan 2

Nature and Extent of Nonmetropolitan Schools in Region VII 2

Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Region VII Nonmetropolitan Schools 4

Distribution of Federal Education Discretionary Grants 5

Several Issues Affecting Rural Schools 6

II. REFERENCE

Iowa Map with SMSAs Indicated 8

Kansas Map with SMSAs Indicated 8

Missouri Map with SMSAs Indicated 9

Nebraska Map with SMSAs Indicated 9

Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Public School Districts, Enrollment, and Number of Schools within ED, Region VII 10

Distribution of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Local Public School Systems, by States and Size of System, for ED Region VII, 1980 11

Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of ED Region VII's Public School Enrollment, 1976–77 School Year 12

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This profile presents selected demographic data on rural and small schools within Region VII of the U.S. Department of Education. The four states (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska) comprising Region VII, are located in what is frequently termed the "grain belt" of the United States. In this region, agriculture and agri-business play a major role in the total economies of the four states and a dominate role in the economies of the rural communities. Rural and small schools, interspersed among these rural communities, provide not only educational services, but often cultural and social activities as well.

Interest in rural and small schools has increased throughout the country and is often identified under the heading, "rural education." In the name of rural education, advocacy groups and organizations have been formed, books and journal articles have been published, conferences and seminar sessions have been convened, and research and surveys have been conducted. To date, there hasn't been an accepted focal point upon which these diverse rural education activities have either converged or diverged. While the activities may have been diverse, they have demonstrated at least two realities; an interest in rural education does exist, and data to examine many of the issues of rural education are not readily available.

The purpose of compiling this profile is to provide the reader with data on several characteristics of rural and small schools within the four state region. Hopefully, such data will serve as a point of reference in future discussions of rural education and stimulate more comprehensive data collection activities into the nature, extent, and impact of rural and small schools within the region.

This profile is organized into two sections; narrative and reference. The sources and raw figures for the data presented in the narrative are detailed in the reference section.

RURAL OR NONMETROPOLITAN

Hampering any discussion of rural education is defining what rural is. While many persons will be able to state, with amazing confidence, whether a particular place is rural or not rural, the U.S. Bureau of the Census offers the best hope for the discerning critic.

The Bureau of the Census defines rural in the negative. In other words, the population not classified as urban constitutes the rural population. In the Bureau's definition, the urban population comprises all persons living in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 inhabitants or more outside urbanized areas.

Another frequently applied definition to rural populations is nonmetropolitan. The nonmetropolitan category, likewise, is a product of the Bureau of the Census. As with the rural definition, to understand nonmetropolitan requires a definition for metropolitan or more specifically, a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). A SMSA is a county or group of contiguous counties which contain at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more. Therefore, the population residing in a SMSA county is classified as metropolitan while the population not residing in a SMSA county is classified as nonmetropolitan.

The Bureau of the Census recognized 247 SMSAs across the country in the 1970 census. In Region VII, there are currently 16 SMSAs. These SMSAs and their respective metropolitan counties are graphically shown in each state in the reference section.

The classifications of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan are utilized in the organization of data in this profile. The reader should be aware that school system's boundaries often are not coterminous with county political boundaries. School district data are classified as metropolitan or nonmetropolitan based upon the county in which the superintendent is located.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF NONMETROPOLITAN SCHOOLS IN REGION VII

Numerous rural school districts exist in each of the four states within Region VII. This can be illustrated by the fact that while Region VII has only 5% of the nation's public school enrollment, it has 15% of the nation's public school districts. The majority of these school districts are located in nonmetropolitan areas. In fact, almost nine out of ten (89.0%) of the 2,387 public school districts are located in nonmetropolitan areas. The numbers and percentages of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan school districts, by state, are:

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	TOTAL DISTRICTS	METRO (%)	NONMETRO (%)
Iowa	443	52 (11.7)	391 (88.3)
Kansas	307	48 (15.6)	259 (84.4)
Missouri	551	120 (21.8)	431 (78.2)
Nebraska	1,086	42 (3.9)	1,044 (96.1)
TOTAL REGION VII	2,387	262 (11.0)	2,125 (89.0)

Approximately one out of every two public school students in Region VII attends classes in these nonmetropolitan schools. The numbers and percentages of the nonmetropolitan public school enrollment, by state, are:

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS

	TOTAL	METRO (%)		NONMETRO (%)	
Iowa	548,159	204,765	(37.4)	343,394	(62.6)
Kansas	422,924	197,616	(46.7)	225,308	(53.3)
Missouri	869,673	527,441	(60.6)	343,232	(39.4)
Nebraska	286,680	122,932	(42.9)	163,748	(57.1)
TOTAL REGION VII	2,127,436	1,052,754	(49.5)	1,075,682	(50.5)

The above figures indicate that education in nonmetropolitan areas plays a major role in the total education system of Region VII. Each of the four states has considerably more nonmetropolitan public school districts than metropolitan. Only Missouri has fewer public school pupils in nonmetropolitan districts than in metropolitan districts. In addition, of the 7,306 total public school buildings in the region, 5,031 or 68.9% are in nonmetropolitan areas.

Not only are the majority of Region VII's public school systems rural or nonmetropolitan, their total enrollments are very small. Consider, for example, that of the 2,387 school districts, 1,653 or 69.3% have a total district enrollment of less than 600 pupils. Of these 1,653 school districts, 1,573 or 65.9% of the districts are in nonmetropolitan areas. The distribution of these rural and small school districts, by state, are shown in the following table:

NONMETROPOLITAN AND SMALL (LESS THAN 600 ENROLLMENT) PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	TOTAL DISTRICTS	NONMETRO DISTRICT WITH LESS THAN 600 ENROLLMENT	PERCENT
Iowa	443	192	43.3%
Kansas	307	145	47.2%
Missouri	551	246	44.6%
Nebraska	1,086	990	91.2%
TOTAL REGION VII	2,387	1,573	65.9%

As the table indicates, Nebraska has almost two out of every three nonmetropolitan public school districts with enrollments of 600 or less in the region. In the other states, just under one out of every two districts is nonmetropolitan and small. Equally revealing is the number of Region VII school districts with enrollments of 300 or less. Iowa has 63 such districts, Kansas has 57, Missouri has 144, and Nebraska has 926.

The grade spans for the 2,387 school districts in Region VII vary considerably among the four states. All of Iowa's 443 districts serve pupils from kindergarten through grade twelve. In Kansas, 306 of it's 307 districts are K-12. Both Missouri and Nebraska have several configurations of elementary and secondary school districts. The grade spans for the public school districts in Region VII are indicated in the following table:

GRADE SPANS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

GRADE SPAN	IOWA	KANSAS	MISSOURI	NEBRASKA
K-6			4	17
1-7			1	1
K-8			59	697
1-8			30	
K-9		1		1
K-11			1	
K-12	443	306	454	293
1-12			2	
7-12				7
9-12				16
No Pupils				54
TOTAL	443	307	551	1,086

In the State of Nebraska, a county superintendent provides administrative services to all school districts within the county that have less than seven teachers. The majority of Nebraska's school districts which are not K-12 are serviced by county superintendents.

RACIAL/ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS OF REGION VII NONMETROPOLITAN SCHOOLS

The racial/ethnic composition of nonmetropolitan school districts in Region VII is basically homogeneous. During the 1976-77 school year, the pupil enrollment in nonmetropolitan public schools was 96.2% white, 2.0% black, 1.0% Hispanics, 5% American Indian, and .3% Asian.

The nonmetropolitan racial/ethnic composition of pupil enrollment was consistent among the four states. The following table indicates the percentages of nonmetropolitan pupils in the five racial/ethnic categories.

RACIAL/ETHNIC PERCENTAGES OF NONMETROPOLITAN PUPIL ENROLLMENT

	AMERICAN INDIAN	ASIAN	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC
Iowa	0.3	0.3	0.4	98.5	0.4
Kansas	0.6	0.5	2.8	93.7	2.5
Missouri	0.3	0.3	4.0	95.2	0.2
Nebraska	1.0	0.3	0.1	96.6	2.0
TOTAL REGION VII	0.5	0.3	2.0	96.2	1.0

DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL EDUCATION DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

Entitlement formula grants account for the bulk of federal funds distributed to elementary and secondary school systems in this country. The basis for the distribution of entitlement grants is usually upon the numbers of certain types of pupils, e.g., handicapped or disadvantaged. Entitlement grants are awarded to state departments of education who, in turn, distribute the funds to local school districts.

Another type of federal education support is the discretionary grant. Discretionary grants are awarded directly from the federal government to local school districts, state departments of education, colleges and universities, and/or public and private non-profit organizations. Discretionary grants usually require a proposal addressed to an identified priority, such as metric education, consumer education, etc. Competition for limited funds in most of the discretionary grant programs is extremely stiff.

The discretionary grants awarded by the U.S. Office of Education for fiscal year 1980 are summarized by states in the table below. In each State, the numbers and amounts of discretionary grants awarded are identified by the categories of state departments of education, metropolitan local education agency, nonmetropolitan local education agency, and area education agency (Iowa). The numbers and amounts of federal education discretionary grants awarded to institutions of higher education and public and private non-profit organizations are not included. The data are summarized from the "U.S. Office of Education Grant and Procurement Report C5 (11/17/79)."

	NUMBER OF GRANTS AWARDED	AMOUNT OF GRANTS
Iowa	21	$2,308,823
SEA	9	649,294
Metro LEA	8	1,260,749
Nonmetro LEA	1	92,257
Area Education Agency (AEA)	3	306,523
Kansas	20	1,836,094
SEA	9	485,263
Metro LEA	5	923,914
Nonmetro LEA	6	426,917
Missouri	30	4,946,196
SEA	3	200,325
Metro LEA	25	4,187,755
Nonmetro LEA	2	558,116
Nebraska	21	2,933,104
SEA	11	468,398
Metro LEA	6	2,126,198
Nonmetro LEA	4	338,508
ED Region VII	92	12,024,217
SEA	32	1,803,280
Metro LEA	44	8,498,616
Nonmetro LEA	13	1,415,798
Area Education Agency (Iowa)	3	306,523

As the figures indicate, metropolitan public schools received considerably more discretionary grants and were awarded a substantially greater amount of funds than nonmetropolitan school districts. Most of the discretionary grants made to local school districts have as their purpose assistance for desegregation (Emergency School Aid Act) and assistance for disadvantaged students (Follow Through Program). The student populations of Region VII's metropolitan school districts meet the purposes of many of the federal discretionary grant programs more than the student populations of most of Region VII's nonmetropolitan school districts.

SEVERAL ISSUES AFFECTING RURAL SCHOOLS

While the issues affecting rural schools within Region VII are almost as diverse as the number of such schools, a few common issues and concerns appear to impact upon a great number of rural schools.

Finance

Providing adequate financial resources to support the operation and maintenance of rural and small schools is, perhaps, the major issue within Region VII. Within each of the four states, the primary source of revenue is generated at the local level. This is illustrated by examining the percentage of revenue generated by federal, state, and local sources for each of the states during the 1976-77 school year.

	FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL
United States	8.8	43.4	47.8
Iowa	5.8	38.0	56.3
Kansas	8.3	39.4	52.3
Missouri	9.4	36.3	54.3
Nebraska	7.7	19.6	72.7

School districts in each of the four states raised more funds from local and less from state sources than the national average, and only Missouri, the most metropolitan state in the region, received more federal funds than the national average. Since the 1976-77 school year, Region VII states have revised, or are in the process of revising, state support formulas.

Generating revenue at the local levels is based upon a locally established tax rate on assessed property value. Without a detailed analysis of assessed valuation and per pupil expenditures of rural districts, generally rural areas tend to be property rich and income poor. Although many of the rural and small schools in Region VII are surrounded by large farming and ranching operations, rural incomes tend to be less than their urban and suburban counterparts. If this assumption is correct, a rural farmer could be paying a greater share of his income in property taxes than the urban or suburban dweller.

Teacher Recruitment and Maintenance

The small rural and isolated schools within Region VII are typical of similar schools across the country in teacher recruitment and maintenance. This similarity stated simply is that rural and isolated schools have a more difficult task of competing for the services of teachers than schools

in urbanized areas. Underlying this difficulty are several common characteristics of rural and isolated schools.

1. Salary is often less than urban areas.

2. Social life, particularly for the single teacher, is considerably less than urban areas.

3. Suitable housing is often limited in rural areas.

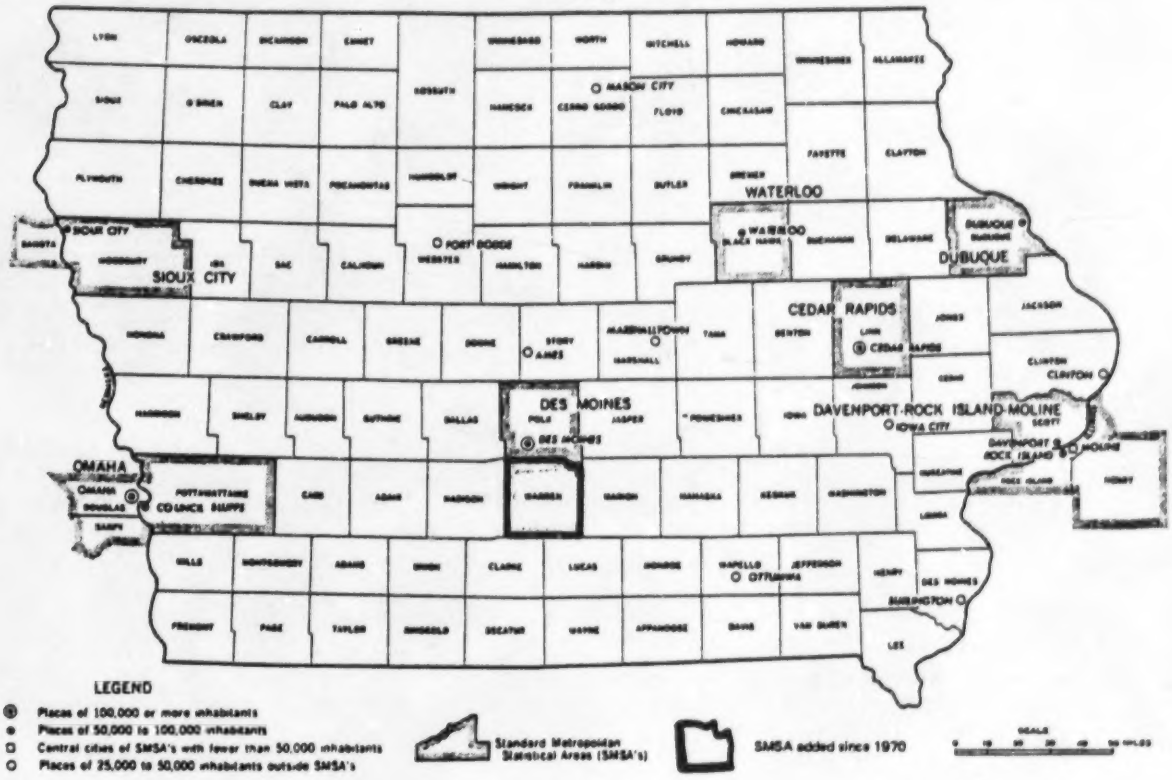
The issue of teacher recruitment and maintenance in rural and isolated school districts is being further compounded by a national teacher shortage. Currently the teacher shortage is primarily in the areas of special education, science, math, and industrial arts, but will probably affect all areas as universities graduate fewer teachers. Also, many of the teachers in rural and small high schools need dual-certification in subject areas.

Diseconomies of Scale

Even if all state and federal funding mechanisms were completely equitable, one fact remains. It often costs proportionately more to deliver services in a small rural school due to diseconomies of scale.

The diseconomies of scale of rural schools were consistently cited by participants in all regional rural roundtables during September 1979. Examples of the diseconomies of scale were higher per pupil administrative and direct instructional costs due to small enrollments and per pupil ratios, higher transportation costs due to sparsity of population, and decreased purchasing power per dollar per item.

IOWA



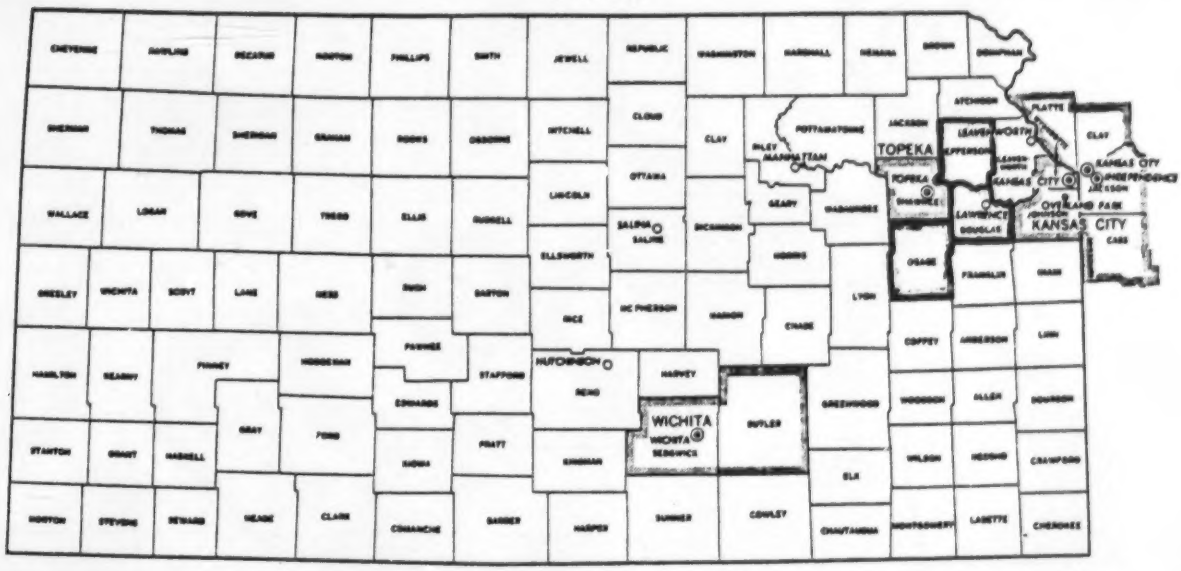
LEGEND

- Places of 100,000 or more inhabitants
- Places of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants
- Central cities of SMSA's with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants
- Places of 25,000 to 50,000 inhabitants outside SMSA's

Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's)

SMSA added since 1970

KANSAS



LEGEND

- Places of 100,000 or more inhabitants
- Places of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants
- Places of 25,000 to 50,000 inhabitants outside SMSA's

Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's)

SMSA added since 1970

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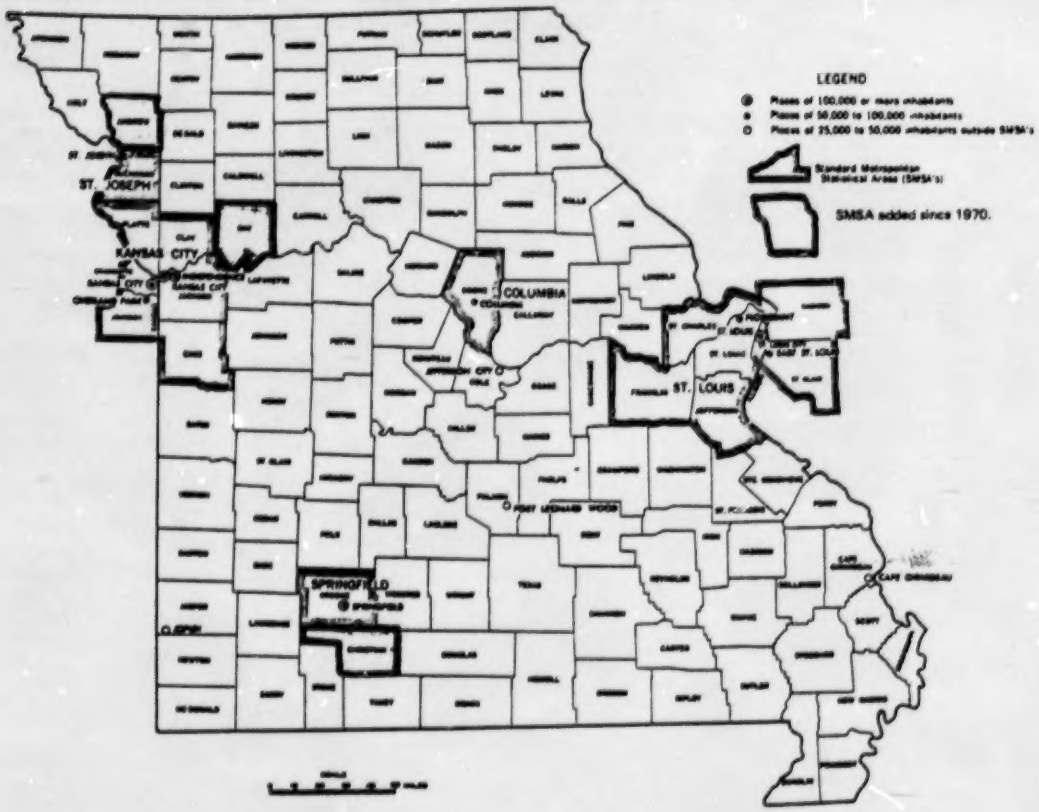
MISSOURI



NEBRASKA

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METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS, ENROLLMENT, AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WITHIN ED, REGION VII

AREA	CHARACTERISTICS	TOTAL	METROPOLITAN	%	NONMETROPOLITAN	%
Region VII	School Districts	2,387	262	11.0	2,125	89.0
	Enrollment	1,127,436	1,052,754	49.5	1,075,682	50.5
	Number of Schools	7,306	2,275	31.1	5,031	68.9
Iowa	School Districts	443	52	11.7	391	88.3
	Enrollment	548,159	204,765	37.4	343,394	62.6
	Number of Schools	1,811	458	25.3	1,353	74.7
Kansas	School Districts	307	48	15.6	259	84.4
	Enrollment	422,924	197,616	46.7	225,308	53.3
	Number of Schools	1,548	492	31.8	1,056	68.2
Missouri	School Districts	551	120	21.8	431	78.2
	Enrollment	869,673	527,441	60.6	343.232	39.4
	Number of Schools	2,228	1,049	47.1	1,179	52.9
Nebraska	School Districts	1,086	42	3.9	1,044	96.1
	Enrollment	286,680	122,932	42.9	163,748	57.1
	Number of Schools	1,719	276	16.1	1,443	83.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, ***Education Directory: Local Education Agencies*** (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980)

***Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan –**

Metropolitan is comprised of all school districts within **Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA).** These areas included the following counties, by states:

IOWA – Black Hawk, Dubuque, Linn, Polk, Pottawattamie, Scott, Warren, and Woodbury.

KANSAS – Butler, Douglas, Jefferson, Johnson, Osage, Shawnee, Sedgwick, and Wyandotte.

MISSOURI – Andrew, Boone, Buchanan, Cass, Christian, Clay, Franklin, Green, Jackson, Jefferson, Platte, Ray, St Charles, St. Louis, and St. Louis City.

NEBRASKA – Dakota, Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy.

Nonmetropolitan is comprised of all school districts not within a SMSA.

NOTE: The reader should be aware that school system boundaries often are not coterminous with county political boundaries. School districts were classified as metropolitan or nonmetropolitan based upon the county in which the superintendent was located.

DISTRIBUTION OF METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS, BY STATES AND SIZE OF SYSTEM, FOR ED REGION VII, 1980

SMALL SCHOOLS (599 PUPILS OR LESS) AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN REGION VII (METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN) ARE INDICATED IN BRACKETS ADJACENT TO THE TOTAL

METROPOLITAN

DISTRICT ENROLLMENT	ED, REGION VII	IOWA	KANSAS	MISSOURI	NEBRASKA
25,000 or more	8	1	3	2	2
10,000 to 24,999	20	6	1	12	1
5,000 to 9,999	26	3	3	17	3
2,500 to 4,999	32	10	6	14	2
1,000 to 2,499	52	6	14	27	5
600 to 999	44	16	11	15	2
300 to 599	38	9	9	16	4
300 or less	42	1	1	17	23
TOTAL	262	52	48	120	42

NONMETROPOLITAN

25,000 or more	0	0	0	0	0
10,000 to 24,999	0	0	0	0	0
5,000 to 9,999	18	9	4	3	2
2,500 to 4,999	47	8	12	21	6
1,000 to 2,499	215	72	44	79	20
600 to 999	272	110	54	82	26
300 to 599	408	130	89	102	87
300 or less	1,165	62	56	144	903
TOTAL	2,125	391	259	431	1,044
TOTAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS	2,387	443	307	551	1,086
TOTAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH ENROLLMENTS OF 599 OR LESS	1,653 [69.3%]	202 [45.6%]	155 [50.5%]	279 [50.6%]	1,017 [93.6%]

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, ***Education Directory: Local Education Agencies*** (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980)

Metropolitan –

All school districts whose boundaries are located within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). A SMSA is a country or group of contiguous countries which contain at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more.

Nonmetropolitan –

All school districts whose boundaries encompass farms, open countryside and places of less than 50,000 residents outside SMSAs.

METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN RACIAL/ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ED REGION VII'S PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT 1976–77 SCHOOL YEAR

	AMERICAN INDIAN	%	ASIAN	%	BLACK	%	WHITE	%	HISPANIC	%	TOTAL
REGION VII	9,688	.4	10,295	.4	192,924	8.4	2,073,012	89.7	24,208	1.0	2,310,127
Metro	4,421	.4	6,233	.5	169,735	14.9	948,748	83.1	12,193	1.1	1,141,330
Non-Metro	5,267	.5	4,062	.3	23,189	2.0	1,124,264	96.2	12,015	1.0	1,168,797
IOWA	1,892	.3	2,503	.4	11,130	1.9	579,791	96.8	3,639	.6	598.955
Metro	798	.4	1,184	.5	9,435	4.3	207,355	94.0	2,124	1.0	220,696
Non-Metro	1,094	.3	1,319	.3	1,695	.4	372,436	98.5	1,515	.4	378,059
KANSAS	2,950	.6	2,600	.6	32,478	7.2	405,526	89.3	10,630	2.3	454,184
Metro	1,591	.7	1,286	.6	25,726	12.3	176,746	84.2	4,605	2.2	209,954
Non-Metro	1,359	.6	1,314	.5	6,752	2.8	228,780	93.7	6,025	2.5	244,230
MISSOURI	2,278	.2	3,746	.4	135,644	14.3	802,533	84.6	4,380	.5	948,581
Metro	1,293	.2	2,834	.5	121,095	20.6	459,948	78.1	3,675	.6	588,845
Non-Metro	985	.3	912	.3	14,549	4.0	342,585	95.2	705	.2	359,736
NEBRASKA	2,568	.8	1,446	.5	13,672	4.4	285,162	92.5	5,559	1.8	308,407
Metro	739	.6	929	.8	13,479	11.1	104,699	86.1	1,789	1.5	121,635
Non-Metro	1,829	1.0	517	.3	193	.1	180,463	96.6	3,770	2.0	186,772

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, ***Directory of Elementary and Secondary School Districts, and Schools in Selected School Districts: School Year 1976–77*** (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977)